

Message Text

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14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6844

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA CITY

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY MEXICO CITY

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

USERDA GERMANTOWN

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 IAEA VIENNA 10542

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SUBJECT: MEDITERRANEAN FRUIT FLY

SUMMARY: IN VIEW RECENT OUTBREAK OF MEDFLY IN LOS ANGELES AREA AND FURTHER SPREAD OF MEDFLY INTO GUATEMALA THIS YEAR, MISSION PROVIDE FOLLOWING BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONCERNING MEDFLY IN CENTRAL AMERICA, AND TO CALL ATTENTION TO POTENTIAL SUPPORTIVE ROLE THAT JOINT FAO/IAEA ENTOMOLOGY LABORATORY COULD PLAY IN CONNECTION WITH AN EXPANDED MEDFLY CONTROL PROGRAM IN CENTRAL AMERICA. END SUMMARY.

1. JOINT FAO/IAEA DIVISION OF ATOMIC ENERGY IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE HAS BEEN INVOLVED FOR MANY YEARS IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN DEVELOPING TECHNIQUES RELATED TO MEDFLY CONTROL AND ERADICATION EFFORTS. ENTOMOLOGY SECTION OF JOINT FAO/IAEA DIVISION, WHICH HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN HEADED BY ENTOMOLOGIST ON LOAN FROM USDA, HAS BEEN PREIMARILY RESPONSIBLE FOR COORDINATING ACTIVITIES
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IN THIS FIELD, AND WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR OVERSEEING UNDP

PROJECT INITIATED IN CENTRAL AMERICA IN 1965. (USAID CONTRIBUTED LABORATORY AND SOME OTHER FACILITIES SUBSEQUENTLY USED IN CONNECTION WITH THIS PROJECT.)

2. THERE ARE NUMEROUS REPORTS AVAILABLE CONCERNING THE EARLY WORK CARRIED OUT IN PANAMA, COSTA RICA AND NICARAGUA IN CONNECTION WITH THIS UNDP-SUPPORTED PROJECT, WHICH FINALLY WAS TERMINATED IN 1972. IN A REPORT PREPARED BY THE JOINT FAO/IAEA DIVISION FOR A WORKING GROUP MEETING HELD IN SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA, IN DECEMBER 1970, IT WAS STATED THAT: QUOTE THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE MEDFLY SPREADS NORTHWARD INTO HONDURAS, EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, MEXICO AND THE USA. QUARANTINE STATIONS AND INSECTICIDE CONTROL, WHERE NECESSARY AND ECONOMICAL, WILL SLOW, BUT NOT STOP, THIS NORTHWARD SPREAD. THEREFORE, THE ONLY WAY TO PREVENT FURTHER AGRICULTURAL LOSSES CAUSED BY THE MEDFLY IS TO ERADICATE THIS PEST FROM CENTRAL AMERICA. END QUOTE. JOINT FAO/IAEA DIVISION WAS THEN PROPOSING AN EXPANDED FOUR-YEAR PROGRAM FOR ERADICATION OF MEDFLY FROM CENTRAL AMERICA. AT THAT TIME, JOINT FAO/IAEA DIVISION ESTIMATED THE COST FOR SUCH PROGRAM AT AROUND \$6 MILLION. GROUP OF EXPERTS REVIEWING THIS REPORT, HOWEVER, CONCLUDED THAT THERE WAS INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION AVAILABLE REGARDING THE EXTENT OF MEDFLY INFESTATION (WHICH AT THAT TIME WAS BELIEVED TO BE CONFINED TO

PANAMA, COSTA RICA AND NICARAGUA), AND FURTHER, THAT THERE WAS INCONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE THAT ERADICATION WAS FEASIBLE. (THIS LATTER CONCLUSION WAS DISPUTED BY JOINT FAO/IAEA DIVISION STAFF.) ACCORDINGLY, THE GROUP RECOMMENDED THAT, INSTEAD OF LAUNCHING A LARGE-SCALE ERADICATION PROJECT, AN IMMEDIATE EFFORT SHOULD BE DEVOTED TO CONDUCTING AN ECONOMIC SURVEY OF ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL MEDFLY DAMAGE IN CENTRAL AMERICA, AND THAT SUBSTANTIALLY STEPPED UP TRAPPING ACTIVITIES BE INITIATED TO DETERMINE MORE PRECISELY THE TRUE EXTENT OF MEDFLY INFESTATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA. THESE UNCLASSIFIED

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ACTIVITIES WERE UNDERTAKEN IN 1971 AND 1972.

3. ECONOMIC SURVEY WAS UNDERTAKEN BY TEAM OF USDA AND UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA EXPERTS UNDER USDA SPONSORSHIP IN COOPERATION WITH USAID. REPORT WAS PUBLISHED IN JULY 1972 AS FIELD REPORT 21. THIS REPORT ALSO CONCLUDED, INTER ALIA, THAT QUOTE IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY CONTROL ERADICATION PROGRAM, THE MEDFLY CAN BE

EXPECTED TO SOON SPREAD INTO HONDURAS EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, AND SUBSEQUENTLY INTO BRITISH HONDURAS AND MEXICO UNQUOTE. FURTHER, THE REPORT CONCLUDED THAT QUOTE ERADICATION OF THE MEDFLY IN CENTRAL AMERICA APPEARS TO BE FEASIBLE, AND SHOULD BE CONSIDERED. TOTAL ESTIMATED COSTS OF SUCH A PROGRAM WOULD BE COVERED BY ESTIMATED BENEFITS IN FIVE TO SEVEN YEARS UNQUOTE. REPORT NOTED THAT AN ERADICATION PROJECT WOULD COST APPROXIMATELY \$31 MILLION OVER A SIX-YEAR PERIOD.

4 APPARENTLY IT WAS DECIDED NOT TO ATTEMPT TO IMPLEMENT LARGE-SCALE ERADICATION PROJECT FOLLOWING COMPLETION IN JUNE 1972 OF ECONOMIC SURVEY AND GATHERING OF THE TRAPPING DATA. IN 1972 OR 1973, MEDFLY SPREAD INTO EL SALVADOR AND HONDURAS AND EARLIER THIS YEAR IT WAS DETECTED FOR FIRST TIME IN GUATEMALA. IN ADDITION, AN OUTBREAK OF MEDFLY INFESTATION OCCURRED IN THE LOS ANGELES AREA IN SEPTEMBER OF THIS YEAR, WHICH, WHILE SMALL AND APPARENTLY CONTAINED, HAS REPORTEDLY HEIGHTENED CONCERN AMONG INSECT AND PEST CONTROL EXPERTS IN U.S., AS WELL AS IN THE FRUIT INDUSTRY, ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF ITS SPREAD IN U.S. IT IS RECALLED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT A MEDFLY INFESTATION IN FLORIDA IN 1956 REQUIRED ABOUT SIXTEEN MONTHS TO ERADICATE AT COST OF MORE THAN \$10 MILLION. (AFOREMENTIONED ECONOMIC SURVEY INDICATES THAT POTENTIAL DAMAGE TO U.S. FRUIT

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INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

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INDUSTRY IF MEDFLY WERE TO BECOME ESTABLISHED IN U.S. WOULD BE APPROXIMATELY \$85 MILLION ANNUALLY. AN ADDITIONAL ESTIMATED \$200 MILLION ANNUAL DAMAGES WOULD OCCUR IN DECIDUOUS FRUITS. THESE ARE 1972 DOLLARS.)

5. BECAUSE OF THE SUBSTANTIAL EXPANDED AREA OF MEDFLY INFESTATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA SINCE THE PROPOSAL FOR AN ERADICATION PROGRAM WAS FIRST MADE BY THE JOINT FAO/IAEA DIVISION ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO, AND IN VIEW OF THE INCREASED COSTS INVOLVED, ERADICATION OF THE MEDFLY IN CENTRAL AMERICA MAY NO LONGER BE PRACTICABLE OR ECONOMICALLY FEASIBLE. NEVERTHELESS, IT SEEMS CLEAR TO THIS MISSION, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF GROWING CONCERN ABOUT A FURTHER SPREAD OF MEDFLY INFESTATION INTO MEXICO AND EVENTUALLY INTO THE U.S., THAT SOME SORT OF LARGE-SCALE CONTROL PROGRAM FOR MEDFLY IN CENTRAL AMERICA IS LIKELY TO BE ESTABLISHED IN THE NEAR FUTURE, POSSIBLY INCLUDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CONTAINMENT BARRIER ACROSS THE ISTHMUS OF TEHUANTEPEC, USING A COMBINATION OF CONTROL
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METHODS, INCLUDING INSECTICIDES AND STERILE FLY RELEASES, TO TRY TO STOP ANY FURTHER INFESTATION NORTHWARD. (WE UNDERSTAND FAO IS ALREADY IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING SUCH A PROJECT, WHICH WOULD BE SUPPORTED BY UNDP AND POSSIBLY OTHER ORGANIZATIONS, SUCH AS USDA.) THE QUESTION OF COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF SUCH A PROJECT IS RAPIDLY BECOMING ACADEMIC, INsofar AS U.S. INTERESTS ARE CONCERNED.

6. AS NOTED EARLIER, JOINT FAO/IAEA DIVISION HAS BEEN ACTIVELY INVOLVED FOR MANY YEARS IN VARIOUS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS RELATED TO MEDFLY CONTROL OR ERADICATION, INCLUDING PROJECTS IN ITALY, SPAIN, CYPRUS, ISRAEL, TUNISIA, PERU, ARGENTINA AND VENEZUELA. IN THIS CONNECTION, JOINT FAO/IAEA ENTOMOLOGY LABORATORY NEAR VIENNA HAS BEEN DOING SUBSTANTIAL RESEARCH OVER THE YEARS TO DEVELOP LESS EXPENSIVE AND IMPROVED SYSTEMS FOR MASS-REARING MEDFLIES, AND IN IMPROVING METHODS FOR HANDLING AND RELEASING STERILE FLIES IN THE FIELD BOTH FROM AIR-CARFT AND THE GROUND, AND IN TRAINING PERSONNEL FROM

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. ADDITIONALLY, JOINT FAO/IAEA DIVISION HAS CONVENED NUMEROUS PANEL AND RESEARCH COORDINATION MEETINGS RELATING TO USE OF STERILE-INSECT TECHNIQUES FOR CONTROL OF FRUIT FLIES, INCLUDING MEDFLY. BECAUSE OF THESE CONTACTS, AND EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE AND CAPABILITIES OF JOINT FAO/IAEA ENTOMOLOGY LABORATORY, WE BELIEVE IT COULD PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN CONNECTION WITH ANY EXPANDED LARGE-SCALE MEDFLY CONTROL PROGRAM IN CENTRAL AMERICA. THIS LABORATORY COULD BE INVOLVED, FOR EXAMPLE, IN CONDUCTING ESSENTIAL ON-GOING RESEARCH RELATING TO ALL ASPECTS OF MASS-REARING OF CENTRAL AMERICA STRAIN OF MEDFLY, INCLUDING ALSO POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENT OF GENETIC CONTROL TECHNIQUES WHICH MIGHT YIELD SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIES OVER THE STERILE-INSECT TECHNIQUE, AND OTHER SUPPORTIVE RESEARCH WORK. (THIS LABORATORY, FOR INSTANCE, IS AUTHORIZED TO IMPORT AND MAINTAIN EXOTIC STRAINS OF MEDFLY. SINCE IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT MEDFLIES COULD BE IMPORTED INTO U.S., AND SINCE IT WILL BE ESSENTIAL TO CONDUCT VARIOUS TYPES OF RESEARCH WITH UNCLASSIFIED

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MEDFLIES IN DIRECT SUPPORT OF ANY LARGE-SCALE CONTROL PROGRAM, THE JOINT FAO/IAEA ENTOMOLOGY LABORATORY WOULD SEEM TO BE A SUITABLE CANDIDATE FOR THIS TASK.)

7. IN VIEW OF FOREGOING, MISSION RECOMMENDS THAT SERIOUS CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO UTILIZING THE CAPABILITIES OF JOINT FAO/IAEA DIVISON AND ITS LABORATORY IN CONNECTION WITH PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ANY LARGE-SCALE MEDFLY CONTROL PROGRAM IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO.LABOWITZ

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